



April 3, 2014

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Northern Flyer Alliance, Inc. is a 501c4 non-profit coalition of 65 communities, civic and business entities advocating restoration of passenger rail service along a corridor transiting Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. The governing board of the Alliance endorses and supports the City of Wichita's Planning Application submitted in response to the Notice of Funding Availability for the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) National Infrastructure Investments, under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014. This Notice announced the availability of \$35M to be awarded by USDOT for planning grants for infrastructure projects that will have a significant impact on the Nation, a metropolitan area or a region.

The Alliance specifically recommends that Wichita's application for Tier I and Tier II environmental reviews as well as preliminary engineering be approved and funded to close the 200 mile Service Gap that exists in Amtrak's National Network by extending the Heartland Flyer passenger train from Oklahoma City through Ponca City to Newton, Kansas to connect with the Southwest Chief.

This project has regional significance because the gap as it exists today, will connect by passenger rail Kansas City with Dallas/Fort Worth through Wichita and Oklahoma City, **a megaregion of 14 million people**. It is in fact the only megaregion in the country that is not connected by rail. The significant return on investment of this project has been studied and proven many times. Studies by the University of Kansas and Texas A&M, completed in 2009 and 2010 respectively, independently show a return many times greater than the cost.

In this part of the nation, a heavy reliance on highways has left rural communities sorely lacking in connectivity and mobility. Many in fact have no schedule bus service, air service or train service, and are many miles from major and regional airports, medical services and places of higher learning. *With financial assistance from USDOT, Wichita's request for the environmental review of this corridor will help the rural communities that fall within the I-35 megaregion be one step closer to solving this huge economic and connectivity problem.*



We consider Wichita's leadership role in preparing the planning application as extending far beyond their jurisdiction with multiple economic benefits for the region. Approval of Wichita's request is critical at this time. All future development is dependent upon this next action following years of preparation to move the project to this point.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Corrison
Mark Corrison
Secretary Treasurer
Northern Flyer Alliance, Inc